

Agreeable Americans

By Arthur Calder-Marshall

STANLEY WEINTRAUB:
The London Yankees
Portraits of American Writers and
Artists in England
464pp. W. H. Allen. £7.95.
0 491 02209 3

Before the First World War, American writers and artists were attracted to London as magnetically to London as they were to Paris after it. In his gallery of what he subtitled "Portraits of American Writers and Artists in England, 1894-1914," Stanley Weintraub summarizes the reasons why.

For the American aspiring to a creative life, London had a sentimental allure, a psychic value, a professional practicality. It meant the presence of the past as a working influence in one's daily life.

In England, Americans had advantages in being both within and without the society. "If you cannot be a duke with a large rent-roll in England," Price Collier wrote in 1909, "by all means be an agreeable American, for to one man and one woman alone are open. No one is jealous of you, no one envious; no one suspects you of pride or vainglory, because being a sovereign yourself, you are equally at home with sovereigns or with the people."

It is surprising the number of American-born writers and artists who became pillars of British society: Henry James, Whistler, Epstein, Sargent, T. S. Eliot, "Joan" the Cornish of Edward VII, Edward Augustus Abbey was called upon and the funeral of that monarch was recorded by Joseph Parnell, both Americans, long resident in London. The *Yellow Book* was edited by the American literary critic, the Victorian magazine *Bluest* by Wyndham Lewis and Ezra Pound, and a host of papers by Frank Harris, Bret Harte, Mark Twain, Pearl Richards, Craigie, daughter of Carter's Little Liver Pills who wrote under the name of "Joan Oliver Hobbes," may not have changed the course of English literature: but London had social importance in their lives. Bret Harte's tales of the Californian Gold Rush of 1850 became a vogue in the United States but were not accepted in London that according to Gertrude Ahterton the Duke of

Manchester, during with a wealthy Californian in 1895, appeared among guests, who were wearing evening dress, clad in thigh-high boots and a red shirt which he had bought as appropriate for the Far West Frontier. Mark Twain, engaged on a World Lecture Tour to raise money to settle debts incurred by unwise investment, stayed on in London until they were paid off by back-work. The quality of his writing suffered: but his self-esteem was restored by being lionized.

Anything is better than the vagabond artist's American of the nineteenth century, hanging round the picture galleries and talking Henry James or Frank Harris according to taste. "I observed Bernard Shaw who, like Wilde and Yeats, had deserted literature to become his discipline. Pound remained a loyal boaster."

The London Yankees does not pretend to be a book with a connected argument. It is a collection of portraits, of American writers and artists in their expatriate English scenes. The research is thorough, original sources supplementing already published material. I found the minor characters even more diverting than the giants. I had never, for example, heard of Harold Frederic, the correspondent to the *New York Times*, who wrote novels under the pen name George Fother, in order to sustain his wife Grace and four children (with whom he lived during the week) in Brook Green and his mistress Kate Lyon and three children (with whom he spent weekends) in a suburban retreat outside Croydon. A pillar of the American Society, he lived his double life with discretion, if not in total secrecy. Unfortunately, when Frederic was dying of heart disease aggravated by smoking and alcohol, his doctor, who recommended abstinence, was dismissed in favour of a Christian Science healer in whom his mistress believed. When he died in the manner he desired, Kate Lyon and the healer were tried for manslaughter. They were acquitted, but the scandal so carefully hidden in life from the *New York Times* became headlines in every newspaper.

Weintraub's levelling comments, "Harold Frederic escaped the puritanical rigidities of the hellfire religion he had examined in the *Damnation of Theron Ware*; yet what hastened his end had been a new religion, itself fresh from America. He had not even escaped the flames. His body was cremated."

It was already established in Paris. Havelock Ellis and Arthur Symonds had been writing in the 1890s. But it took the pragmatic publisher and entrepreneur Ezra Pound from Philadelphia to convert a tendency



"Chekhov at Yalta 1901". This previously unpublished study by Ann Morrow, in water-colour and crayon, appears in *European Illustration*, 1979/80, edited by Edward Booth-Clibborn (264pp. European Illustration, 12, Carlton House Terrace, London, SW1. £18.50. 0 904866 12 2). The illustrations, 125 of them in colour, have been selected by a jury including Milton Glaser, Tom Maschler and Michel Ottolenghi.

Aesthetes all

By Peter Keating

RUPERT HART-DAVIS (Editor):
Selected Letters of Oscar Wilde
400pp. Oxford University Press
£6.95
0 19 212205 3

IAN SMALL (Editor):
The Aesthetes: A Sourcebook
204pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul
£7.95
0 7100 0145 2

IAN FLETCHER (Editor):
Decadence and the 1890s:
Stratford-upon-Avon Studies, 17
216pp. Edward Arnold £9.95
0 7131 6208 2

Rupert Hart-Davis's edition of *The Letters of Oscar Wilde* was first published in 1962. Although widely praised and accepted immediately as a major importance for any understanding of Wilde and aestheticism, it has long been out of print. This situation has been partially corrected by the new welcome publication of *Selected Letters of Oscar Wilde*. A few letters are given in a more complete form here than in the earlier volume, though these, of course, do not compensate for the letters now omitted and serious students will still want to consult the full edition. But the selection is generous, ordered so that the autobiographical nature of Wilde's letters is effectively conveyed, and enhanced at every stage by Rupert

One man's angst

ROBERT MORLEY:
Robert Morley's Book of Worries
200pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson
£3.95
0 297 77698 3

Robert Morley, with those eloquent wit and witless, could command us to the verge and reading from here, dedicated to his wife, in a book of a hundred of his letters, from Accidents to Zips, 1912-1979, and, under the title, "A Last Letter," a chapter on his personal life. Can you supply one? Consider the following

Hart-Davis's enormously informative annotation. Wilde also holds, inevitably, a central place in Ian Small's *The Aesthetes: A Sourcebook* and in the collection of critical essays *Decadence and the 1890s* edited by Ian Fletcher. Dr. Small's approach is curiously insular for a movement that was so European in style and tone, with Swinburne, Pater, and Whistler joining Wilde as the key figures: equally curious is the meagre bibliographical information provided in an anthology that is clearly aimed at university courses. It is however good to see a whole section of the book devoted to satirical reactions to aestheticism and to have reproduced some of George Du Maurier's cartoons.

There is nothing insular about *Decadence and the 1890s* and the bibliographies it contains are unusually detailed and useful. The eight contributors to the book share the belief that although the aesthetic (or decadent) movement was dominant in English literature only a brief period of time, its impact was wide-ranging and many-sided. All of the essays are provocative and if some of them get lost in abstract critical theories, the feeling that aestheticism should be about life as well as Art is not altogether lost. In R. A. Thornton's sensible introductory essay on the various uses and meanings of decadence in England, in John Lucas's discussion of the connections between Naturalism and Symbolism, and in John Storey's evocative account of the actress Eleonora Duse.

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stances under which you may have to "Sharks" it seems that some quite nasty ones have always been around while we swim in a pool of paradise. Irrational impulses? Morley has an irresistible urge to pound loudly to an Irishman, "I know that a trouble shared is not a trouble halved, and that it is a social duty to see that any one's own experience is a remedy to the effect that this time next year the Gossacks will be appearing on the coast of Dover. I know that I have been several times of late, and for the winter, can plant a tree."

Matilda Trevelyan

Rise and fall on the Clyde

By T. C. Barker

PETER L. PAYNE:
Colvilles and the Scottish Steel Industry
458pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £25.
0 19 828278 8

The fortunes of a particular business are inevitably related to those of its rivals. A first-rate company history must, therefore, concern itself with the rise or fall of its competitors. The *Colvilles and the Scottish Steel Industry*, however, may be consulted, often have the added advantage of telling us more about the company in question than do its own records. Here Peter Payne has been particularly fortunate for, in the days during the 1980s when he was the first Colquhoun Lecturer in Business History at Glasgow, he was able to track down a mass of records belonging to various concerns in the west of Scotland. Some of these have been used subsequently in the writing of these which he has also been able to draw upon. His book, in fact, is an extremely detailed and well-documented story of the Scottish steel industry as a whole between the 1870s and the 1920s, as well as the history of Colvilles itself.

These pages present a rather different picture of the British economy in the half-century before 1914 from the one usually encountered in the text-books, which put the emphasis on retardation and suggest faltering entrepreneurship as a primary reason. The period between 1880 and 1914 saw remarkable progress in Clyde shipbuilding. Steel ships, amounting to only 10 per cent of launches at the end of the 1870s, had become almost universal in the shipyards there ten years later. The number of steel-driven vessels, already over 200,000 by the later 1870s, moved impressively upwards, exceeding 600,000 in 1907 and 750,000 in 1913. The Clyde benefited particularly from what was virtually a new British industry. Large-scale steel manufacture, using modern Siemens and Bessemer plant, grew up nearby, mainly to serve this rapidly growing local market for ship and marine boiler-plates.

David Colville, originally a provision merchant in Glasgow, but from 1860 an iron producer, was just one

of a number of enterprising Scottish industrialists who, round about 1860, spread their operations and moved into steel. By concentrating upon the melting and rolling processes, David Colville & Sons managed at Dalzell to obtain better trading results than their rivals, including the larger, technically advanced but overcapitalized Steel Company of Scotland, whose records Professor Payne has used extensively for his account of developments in this period. By the eve of the First World War, Colvilles, with an ingoing capacity of well over 350,000 tons, was already the largest steel producer in Scotland and one of the largest in Britain.

The First World War—and the mistakes made during the euphoric boom which followed it when too many dubious and inflated expansion schemes—halted growth on the Clyde. Scottish steel suffered unfavourably with those of pre-war days, though 500,000 tons were reached in 1921 and 1920. Real growth, however, came from 1930 onwards when launches ceased almost entirely and never returned to the new, lower norm of the 1920s. The most interesting part of this book deals with the protracted efforts to rationalize the industry in order to meet this entirely new situation.

Colvilles, still a family company, had shown considerable foresight, very early in the present century, in selling shares to some of its senior managers. One of these, John Craig, the son of one of the company's furunculmen, had started work for Colvilles as an office-boy earning 3s per week. In 1902, he had become one of the two remaining Colvilles of the second generation, he became chairman and managing director of the company. An elder of his church, he possessed those religious and moral qualities which are often associated with success in business. He had enormous energy and an unlimited commitment to work, was forever vigilant and always on the move. He knew many of the workers by name and was prepared to spend time talking to them during his visits. He was also one of the stubbornness of negotiators when it came to gaining what he considered to be a fair share of any merger proposal whether this was advanced by consulting engineers, accountants or bankers. He

knew that he was negotiating from a position of strength.

Colvilles, a very efficient steel producer which had acquired its own coalmine during the First World War, had also diversified into galvanizing and, having recruited Dr (later Sir) Andrew McCance, into special steels. Negotiations seemed endless as the industry grew weaker. The leaders of Scottish steel had abusive personalities and, we are told, without exception "hated each other". Colvilles reached an agreement with Stewarts and Lloyds, but further economies were reached by the interested parties only when expiry seemed imminent. The Scottish steel industry did not undergo convalescence after 1934. It was, Professor Payne remarks, more like being moved from the critical list to the intensive care unit.

Craig, knighted in 1953, continued as chairman until 1956, by which time he had served in the post for forty years and was eighty-two. The economic climate was then very different and the industry did not have to rely so heavily on shipbuilding. The last third of the book is devoted to schemes for coordinating planning at Ravenscraig, Hunterston and elsewhere. Here the author is fortunate in being able to use, and quote from, correspondence and other original material down to very recent years.

His book will appeal both to those who are interested in steel and to those with interests in the west of Scotland. It also deserves to be read by others who are concerned more generally with Britain's economic troubles which, on the evidence of these pages, really date back to the First World War. For reasons of space, Payne tells us, he had to omit several sections dealing with industrial relations, though these, despite interwar unemployment, nationalization, deindustrialization and rationalization, were traditionally very good. As a Scottish steel worker put it: "Ours wasn't a hating trade."

The book is very detailed and contains more than fifty statistical tables. It is not to be read in a hurry. Nevertheless it does provide much food for thought about earlier strength and later weakness in the industry which no developed nation can afford to be without; and it also sheds light on Scotland's growing economic plight as the centre of industrial gravity moves southward within England and Wales increasingly to cross the Channel.

Fifty years on . . .

In the TLS of January 9, 1930 Basil de Selincourt reviewed *Tradition and Experiment in Present-Day Literature*, addresses delivered at the City Literary Institute by Edmund Blunden, Edith Sitwell, Rebecca West and others:

... Miss Sitwell, always lively and provocative, has several pages which arrest attention, because they propound a new artistic attitude based on the new character of the age.

The principal aim of the new poets [she writes] is to increase consciousness. We do not try to force our way of seeing upon the people. We try to give the people their own way of seeing—to remove fear. . . . The modern artist is not concerned with the mass, but with the fulfilling of the destinies of the single individuals that make up the mass. And again:—

The great quality of the modern masters is an explosive energy—the separating up of the molecules—exploring the possibilities of the atom.

She remarks, further, that because the age is mechanical and disjunctive, it has been her instinct to exhibit these qualities in her own work. The rhythms of her poetry are violent, syncopated, jazz-like, because we live amid "a wild race for time, confined within limits that are at once made and circumvented". These ideas, interesting as they are, seem to involve an excessive incoherence; and surely they overlook, to begin with, the distinction between conscious and unconscious reactions. The wildness of the age, if it is wild, might well have its own convulsions on its side, and so pass into their poetry; but it is hard to understand why one who sees the rush . . . should wish to be in accord with it. . . .

The value of Miss Sitwell's confession is that it brings into the open a kind of misapprehension which has been affected by it is proved to be widespread. Undoubtedly our sense of the value of the individual is among the best achievements of our day. Roaming about in the past, we have only in the mind that apprehends them, we guard against mistaking labels for experiences, against ready-made knowledge, against borrowed admiration. For all that, the artist must strive to find a way to define and complete it. Every

man is to judge it for himself, but he cannot judge the indeterminable, except to say that it is indeterminate. A work of art can never be a half-creation, which each admirer completes to taste. It is a realized, organic vision, only living in our minds, than its creator's in so far as its total reality can be interfused with theirs. . . . In fact, our present-day recognition of the individual as the seat of judgment in no way changes the function of art, though it may well enhance the difficulty of artistic achievement. The artist, it appears, must range more widely and observe more closely before he can find the universality which is now required of him. For he is to be a reconciler, a counterpoise to our divisions, not an exploiter of them.

So, too, the fact that we have lately discovered the atom and its constituents, if it has any effect upon him, can only affect him in the same way. All this talk of atoms and individualism and disjointedness is really itself disjointed. All that is explosive and analytical, all methods of disintegration and of shock are necessarily uncongenial to art, since the compensations they involve must be provided by the work which administers them. Men are indeed weltering in the enjoyment of this new-found individuality of theirs, and the modern which has led to its discovery have led them further to realize multifarious evocative influences in a new-found world. In the confusion the artist may easily be unseated, but his nature is not changed. Miss Sitwell herself admits it. "The people who are doing work of any importance in poetry today," she writes, "are returning to classicism of structure as a protest against anarchy," and "the primary needs in poetry today are a greater expressiveness, a greater normality and a return to rhetoric." But this sounds like a recommendation of remedial measures to be externally applied, and what is that reference to people of importance if not an appeal to a rather ignorant kind of fear? Not to recognize the method of explosive-ness redeemed by classicism is to be unimportant, is to be in the outer circle! Unfortunately the members of the inner circle change their views so rapidly that their devotees cannot keep pace with them; only too often they voice different phases of their development on successive pages of print.

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Union difficulties

By Patricia Beer

LAURENCE LERNER:
Love and Marriage
Literature and its Social Context
264pp. Edward Arnold. £12.
0 7131 6227 9

"With a marriage like that, who needs adultery?" Laurence Lerner is speaking of the union of Romeo and Juliet which he shows to be unusual in two ways (literary way, of course, in terms of life all the circumstances are highly unusual). The kind of love which instantaneously teaches the torches to burn bright is not the sort that traditionally ends in marriage, and this particular union lacks an essential element of marriage, i.e. prolonged cohabitation; the couple exchange only fifty-five lines of conversation after the ceremony.

In normal cases marriage does not, of course, result from the union of the past, cited by Lerner, of love and marriage never go together like a horse and carriage. "Love" as he says "exists outside marriage, or ceases when marriage begins, or enters marriage only to destroy it."

Nobody familiar with the convention of romantic love needs to be surprised by this argument, but that is not to say that the first two chapters, which set it forth, can be skipped. The subject is persuasively introduced and there is much of incidental interest, such as the interesting arbitrariness of some of the examples. Lerner is not concerned at this point with intrinsic literary merit, and it is rather startling to find him discussing *Anna Karenina* and *David Copperfield* in the same breath.

End of the *Affair*, mentioned in the same breath as *Dante's Beatrice*, though both novels are admirable and both juxtapositions illuminating.

In his third chapter Laurence Lerner temporarily deserts literature and its tangible attributes, the love portion, in favour of social history, and concentrates on the various procedures by which real men and women in the past have chosen their partners. He has the choice made for them. He returns to the fold, however, briskly dismissing the subject of the real-life arranged match, which he shows not always to have been such a terrible thing. He then perhaps than modern custom, in that it was to be an excellent intuitive, he looks again at literature; for meanwhile, back in the novel, there is confusion on this subject. Dickens, in *Nicholas Nickleby*, is up to his eyes in the very idea of love. He arranges a match for his lovely young daughter, Madeline, it has to be said with a fanatical, old-fashioned old Arthur Geide. Other writers (and indeed Dickens himself in his later work) are much less absolute about the matter.

In the discussion of married love, which follows, the examples have to be even more arbitrary than in the opening chapters, as Lerner wishes to survey the relevant behaviour of society from the sixteenth century onwards and the interaction of the two. Faced with the task of surveying the history, he employs what is probably the only viable method: the spot check. He selects "three historical moments in the third of which, as the book is presented, the twentieth century representative of marriage gives rise to a valuable account of the marriage. The treatise so far is an integral whole, the last part, however, is

revert against the first. After this the main impetus appears to be spent, the concluding chapters on feminism and sex respectively, being a sort of comic's tall, showy but separate. They reminded me of the address, in 1962, of the OED (where, bristling, champagne, champagne) the concepts, though essential, have arrived in this particular form rather late in the day.

There is much to enjoy in this book. For example, the author's speculations as to how characters in plays should ideally appear. In what tone does Juliet say "O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?" "Ought Rosalind to smile when she declares "Men have died from time to time and worms have eaten them, but not for love."? One minor complaint is on critical cliché, for example, he repeats the tired old comment that Jane Austen, "leaving to step outside her own experience, writes no scenes in which only men about the scene where he is knighted. Emma a specific account of what Mr Elton is like and what he says in his male company."

One of the latest books in the *Twentieth Century* series, this series is on the writer and critic, Joyce Carol Oates (1938-1979). The author, Joanne V. Greig, is an associate professor of English at Wayne State University. Although still relatively young, Joyce Carol Oates has published an enormous quantity of work. Miss Greig has limited the scope of the book to the years 1955 and 1979. The book includes a chronology of Oates' work, a bibliography, and a list of her major works. The book is a valuable account of the writer and critic, Joyce Carol Oates (1938-1979).

One man's angst

ROBERT MORLEY:
Robert Morley's Book of Worries
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0 297 77698 3

Robert Morley, with those eloquent wit and witless, could command us to the verge and reading from here, dedicated to his wife, in a book of a hundred of his letters, from Accidents to Zips, 1912-1979, and, under the title, "A Last Letter," a chapter on his personal life. Can you supply one? Consider the following

Crisis in Cumbria

By Joan Thirsk

ANDREW E. APPELBY:
Famine in Tudor and Stuart England
250pp. Liverpool University Press. £10.75.
0 85323 014 5

The French have long been familiar with their melancholy record of famines, which caused high mortality in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The English, on the other hand, have thought themselves immune, attributing any exceptional high death rates found in parish registers to plague or typhus. We are now scrutinizing the evidence more rigorously, and learning to recognize different patterns of mortality: that associated with plague is different from that caused by typhus, and starvation is different again. As a result death from hunger is being recognized as a significant cause of high mortality in various parts of the North, and Midlands England in the years 1587-8, 1598, and 1623.

When Professor Appleby sets this evidence in the wider context of English and European experiences, a complicated checker-board of black and white patches emerges. The years around 1597 saw famines in Ireland, Scotland, France, 1623 mortality did not seriously affect Southern England, but it killed large numbers of people in Northern England and Scotland. In 1653 English statesmen were preoccupied with the superabundance of grain, and their difficulties in disposing of it. What then does the evidence of these three decades tell us?

The remainder of Professor Appleby's book discusses the weak

modest in its goals, succinct, and down-to-earth. From the parish registers of Westmorland and Cumbria, he recovers clear evidence of high mortality (double or treble the normal), and explains step by step how he arrives at the conclusion that starvation was the cause of the deaths. Bubonic plague, usually started in late spring, caused many deaths in late summer and early autumn, and subsided in winter. It did not spread widely where settlement was dispersed. Typhus was most likely to begin in the winter, and in the worst weather, and very rarely killed children. Thus famine must be suspected as a cause of mortality when ever high grain prices indicate scarcity at the same time, when deaths cluster in the winter and spring, and reach twice the average, when they occur in several neighbouring parishes at the same time, and when they kill a high proportion of children and old and poor people. Subsequent to these tests, the history of the famine in 1587-8 is attributed to typhus with some assistance from famine, but starvation alone was the cause in 1597 and 1623.

The clustering of these crises of subsistence calls for some explanation. It is unlikely that any will be identified, earlier, and probably later. In the twenty years between 1580 and 1590 England enjoyed food, pasture and relative plenty, and before that parish registers are too scanty and few to disclose mortality rates. After 1653 English statesmen were preoccupied with the superabundance of grain, and their difficulties in disposing of it. What then does the evidence of these three decades tell us?

The remainder of Professor Appleby's book discusses the weak

nesses in the Cumbrian economy, which, in this short period of fifty years, laid it open to such calamities. A rise in population of about 43 per cent between 1563 and 1603 was the principal cause. Newcomers arrived from the north and west, and found old forest margins; native families provided for their young by subdividing their holdings. Since the diversified diet of Southern England had not yet reached Cumbria, much reliance was placed on the harvest of oats and barley. Many parishes had considerable populations of smallholders and subtenants, cultivating small bits of land. Their slender resources, unsupported by supplementary industrial occupations, explain the vulnerability in years of bad harvest.

That famines did not return again to Cumbria was due to the slow but steady growth of industrial and commercial enterprises like iron and lead mining, and salt-making in the seventeenth century; the expansion of trade with Ireland and Scotland; and more intensive cattle and sheep farming. The growth of the cattle trade, accompanied by an expansion of the leather trades. More cleverly still, perhaps, when Cumbria was drawn more firmly into the network of English trade, it ceased to be a remote area of subsistence that it should contribute more to national taxation. Its low rate of payment was not quite so accurate a reflection of its poverty at the end of the seventeenth century as Professor Appleby would have us believe. Laker it was a legacy from the past, which the Cumbrians cleverly managed to preserve at a critical time in their economic development. And as Cumbria supplied more of its specialized products to the South, it could be more confident of receiving emergency supplies of grain in return. The bad harvests of the 1690s did not reproduce the famines of a century earlier.

Wayne Franklin

Discoverers, Explorers, Settlers

The Diligent Writers of Early America

The whole process by which Europe came in touch with and tried to describe America, and the continual strain on imported language exerted by new circumstances or facts, is considered in this book. Franklin examines a wide variety of forms—captivities, histories, promotions, letters, travels, maps, charts, paintings—and covers the period from 1492 to about 1800. £9.00.

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James C. McClelland

Autocrats and Academics

Education, Culture and Society in Tsarist Russia

McClelland shows that Russian autocrats and the academics, while often openly antagonistic, nevertheless shared common assumptions about Western models for Russian education. He goes on to show how the policy resulting from this unwitting congruence worked to defeat the very different ends each thought it served. £8.40.

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